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## BACCALAUREATE SERMON:

**DELIVERED**

**IN THE**

**CHAPEL OF THE WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY,**

**AT THE CLOSE OF THE**

## COLLEGIATE YEAR, 1838-9

**TO THE**

## CANDIDATES

**FOR THE**

**BACHELOR'S DEGREE.**

BY REV. D. D. WHEDON, A. M.,  
PROFESSOR OF ANCIENT LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE IN THE WESLEYAN  
UNIVERSITY.

**MIDDLETOWN:**

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**1839.**



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WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY, JULY 8, 1839.

REV. PROFESSOR WHEDON—

Dear Sir,

At a meeting of the Graduating Class, held this morning, the undersigned were appointed a Committee, to tender to you the thanks of the Class for your very able and interesting Discourse of last evening, and to request a copy for publication. By complying with this request, you will highly gratify the Class as well as the Students generally, and confer a favor upon the public.

Very respectfully yours,

JONATHAN COE,  
ABIEL CONVERSE,  
MEAD HOLMES.

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WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY, JULY 8, 1839.

*Messrs. Jonathan Coe, Abiel Converse, Mead Holmes,*  
Committee of the Graduating Class.

MY DEAR SIRS—

I have received with gratified feeling, through you, the testimonial of your Class, of their kind estimate of my last evening's Address and their approval of its principles. In complying with your request for its publication, permit me to avail myself of this probably final opportunity of expressing to the Class, my cordial interest for, and sympathy with them, at this momentous period of their lives. Be assured, young gentlemen, both for yourselves and for them, of my kindest recollections of the past, and my ardent prayers for your earthly prosperity and eternal happiness.

Very truly yours,

D. D. WHEDON.





## SERMON.

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BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART, FOR THEY SHALL SEE GOD.

Matt. v, 8.

It is a frequent incident in the gorgeous and sometimes instructive fictions of the middle ages, that when a young candidate for earthly fortunes goes forth to seek his future destinies, the patron of his previous years binds, perhaps, about his neck, some *amulet*, charmed with a secret spell, mysteriously connected with supernatural agencies, and holding a mastering arbitration over the fates of the young adventurer. Were I to select for you, my young friends, to whom this evening I address a requested parting charge, not an amulet, touched with lunar influences over your coming vicissitudes, but—what were infinitely more valuable—a high, a holy, an eternal *principle*, pregnant with priceless truth and connected with immortal destinies; it should be a full appreciation, by deep experience of that blessedness above all other bliss—the blessedness pronounced by him who spake as never man spake, upon the genuinely pure in heart.

The imaginations even of grave commentators have glowed into an unwonted vividness, at the picture presented by the evangelic histories, of the primitive scene of the delivery of the Savior's sermon upon the mount of Beatitudes. From the gentle summit of that elevation, by this one transaction forever made a consecrated spot—situated in the midst of one of the most pictur-

esque countries upon creation's map—in the fresh morning of one of the balmiest of terrestrial climes, did the GREAT TEACHER, surrounded by the assembled multitudes, deliver to his μαθηται—*his pupils*—upon whom he was about to confer their collective Apostolic diploma, those lessons of spiritual wisdom, which he designed to promulgate through them, with a divine authority, to a listening world. In addressing you, our pupils, about to start forth into the wide world for the fulfillment of your probationary earthly mission, (for you, with every son of humanity, have your responsible life's mission,) what better can I do—what other dare I do, than sink myself from your view, and let the Great Original himself speak? Fancy's picture of the imparadised spot where Jesus preached, amid the surrounding sterility of the heaven cursed earth, cannot present a purer aspect than the moral freshness of that discourse itself amid the comparative moral Zuhara of this world's literature. Wearied and disgusted from the selfish agitations of worldly contests and ambitions, distrustful of the unauthoritative precepts and conjectural guessings of mere human philosophy, tired of the fitful, overstrained inspirations of the half frenzied spirit of profane genius, how recreating it is to turn to the calm simplicity of this one composition—this fresh, unmingled crystalline flow from the celestial fountains—this voice divine, like a strain of heaven-born music earthward straying—breathing the authority of a mild omnipotence through all its gentle syllables—beaming through its veil of human words the infinite majesty—the softened radiance of divinity.

Of this discourse as of all the teachings of our Savior and of his whole mission, the topics of our text,

viz. purity of heart and communion with the divinity, are the central and primary objects. In the views which it will be our purpose to present, we shall consider *purity of heart* in three respects: its intrinsic nature; its development in the formation of our principles; and its exhibition in practical action.

I. *Purity of heart*; they are sublime words; expressive of the height of moral and spiritual perfection. And it is before the very loftiness of their moral elevation, perhaps, that the mind stands aghast. In presenting them to you I almost hear you exclaim; "truly if this be the standard which you present us—to be at once perfectly good—your purpose defeats itself—you dismiss us with an admonition dishearteningly impracticable." Is it of any use to suggest, my friends, that in moral, as in intellectual advancement, all that man has done, man may do; nay, that goodness is that quality which heaven has placed peculiarly at our option? Fortunate life heaven has placed at the mercy, of earthly vicissitudes; honorable life, at the decision of human opinion; happy life, beyond the reach, perhaps, of all attainment; but a good life—and how good a life we please, God has suspended upon the choice of our own responsible will. I have stood astonished at the sublime moral conception expressed by one of the loftiest and purest of human spirits, the illustrious christian sage of Northampton, Jonathan Edwards, when he adopted this resolution, viz. that if it be supposable fact that but one absolute specimen and model of perfect human goodness is to exist in an age, he would strive to act as if it were his dispensation, to be in his age that model. How does the lofty height of such a purpose

place us above the sordid views, the average moralities and the current examples of a depraved world; and what an elevation of moral standard would immediately rise, if all even who are disposed to goodness, would make this the soul-engrossing standard of their lives! But if our moral purpose sink below this standard of moral purity, still it cannot be profitless for us to form that standard in our minds; to place among our choicest conceptions, and even among our warm aspirations, a model of perfect moral beauty; and to accustom the mind to contemplations of the pure and the good. The poet loves to store his mind with images of varied gracefulness; and, especially does his genius aspire to conceptions of pure and perfect idealities which are unknown to the dreams of the dull and the worldly. The statuary's imagination is an intellectual temple, filled with godlike formations; and especially does he strive by continued self-refinements, by intense and unremitted intellectual abstractions, to form to himself the image of absolute beauty—the ultimate acme of possible loveliness. The absence of every effort and every ideality of this kind, is the attribute of the sensual and the gross—the mere clods of humanity. And though the contemplative poet may not rival the imageries of the great masters of song, nor the statuary eclipse the fame of him, who is said to have embodied the poetry of Homer himself in marble; still is the mind formed to a harmony with the perfection to which it struggles; the taste is chastened and purified; the imagination is vivified, and the genius endowed with new and more widely varied powers of creativeness. And so it is with the aspirant after moral attainment. It is something, nay, it is much to

be such an aspirant ; for this at once takes the character from among the contentedly bad. And for such a one, it may not be profitless, to form in the mind and to dwell awhile in contemplation of, and to return with frequent repetition to, a mind-created model of goodness, by which the moral taste may be improved and to which the character may conform itself. In this conforming process, an honest self-examination will detect many a failure, and reveal many an inconsistency. Often will it seem that no progress has been made, and even that the course has been retrograde. Yet be not despairing ; that very agony of regret is a hopeful symptom ; the very tendency to despair is proof that all is not desperate ; even while our efforts have been errant, it is much that our efforts were not unmade. If in the arduous ascent our feet have strangely slid-den and retrograded, let our errors past be transformed into lessons of future vigilance ; if the progress for which we had indulged some past self-gratulation be detected as deceptive and unreal, let it teach us a more searching self-discrimination ; if our path be literally scattered with the fragments of broken resolutions, disgraced professions and demolished schemes of self-reform—sorrowing but not discouraged—ashamed but not scouted—let us never cease with unyielding patience and persevering faith, studying new inventions of self-correction, constructing new plans and practising all sorts of versatile stratagems of self-discipline, assured that to fight unyieldingly is a certainty of not being conquered, and that the victory can never be fully lost, until the battle field is traitorously deserted.

*Purity of heart*—they are beautiful words—happy the mind by whom that beauty is appreciated ; transcend-

ently happy the heart in which that beauty is realized. They are words of physical origin ; and perhaps their moral import may not unaptly be illustrated by a physical image. See that crystal goblet which stands in almost shadowless transparency upon your table ; filled with an element so limpid, so pure, so impalpable, that like the translucent beauty which it occupies, it scarce presents an object to arrest the ray of the eye which loves to dwell upon it. What more perfect image of purity can the mind present ? And now, while the mind is enjoying a calm delight in unison with such beauty, let your chemist pour in a mass of foul and heterogeneous sediment, and mark how the dense folds of the murky cloud, slowly convolving, heighten by the contrast of its dusk the purity with which it cannot assimilate. Were both fluids of a like blackness, the addition would be unperceived ; for it is by the clearness of the surrounding luminous element, that we mark the sullen outlines of the invading infusion. So with the elements of the heart. There is many a heart the native home of all that is foul and vile ; into which you may infuse any additional element of depravity, and it is soon absorbed into latency and invisibleness by the congenial corruption of the mass. On the other hand, to purity of heart, the introduction of every malign emotion is at once palpable and painful. Like a sullyng breath upon the mirror's surface it is at once visible and transient. There are minds naturally pure from *certain* malignities. To one heart the rankling venom of envy is so uncongenial, that it rises like a nauseating and corrosive gall, and is instantly suppressed. To another amiable heart, the burning passion of anger is so painful, that like a

coal in the bosom, it is a moment's torture and expelled forever. If now some mighty purifying power, entering the soul, could sweep from it every congeniality with the depraved; if the expulsive energy of some new all searching, all pervading affection should pre-occupy the being and allow no room for an unhallowed occupancy; or if some sovereign principle should assume a regal dominance, and with absolute decree, banish every insurrectionary rival, whether the causation be divine or human, or whether the process be natural or super-natural, the result would be the blessedness of the pure in heart. And this may bring us to what we may consider as the constituent quality of moral purity.

I would therefore lay down the proposition—the test and central element of purity of heart, is the absolute and pervading supremacy of the principle of conscience over the whole man. Of conscience may be affirmed what Plato affirmed of truth. It is the shadow of the Almighty. Conscience is the representative image of God installed over the world within the man. Of that image HE is the divine prototype—the originate substance—for God is an Almighty Conscience and his government is the omnipotence of right. And when conscience is established in sovereignty over the realm of the soul, then and there is created an image of the government of God—then is the kingdom of God within you. Beneath its holy sceptre there, peace, truth, and freedom flourish. The absolute despotism of conscience is the most perfect liberty of the soul. The absolute banishment which it decrees, of every thing abominable or that maketh a lie, sanctifies the atmosphere of the spirit and purifies the temper of the heart. This, the blessedness of the pure in heart,



Which nothing earthly gives or can destroy,  
 The soul's calm sunshine and the heart-felt joy,  
 Is virtue's prize.

Beautifully did Bishop Butler affirm of conscience, that, "had it strength as it has right, had it power as it has manifest authority; it would absolutely govern the world:" and sublimely did Hooker remark of that law whose vital principle is conscience, that "its residence was the bosom of God, and its voice the harmony of the universe." And could the peace divine with which it illumines a single beatified bosom, go out like a purely streaming serenity, over the suffering spirits that breathe the troubled atmosphere of this suffering earth, how would a holy hush be breathed, and a Sabbath quietness be laid upon all the surging elements of our turbulent humanity. Could the empire of conscience be in one moment invisibly enthroned, in all its silent and gentle omnipotence over the inmost beating bosom of each human individual that lives upon the area of our globe; that one instantaneous, quiet and unseen change would be mightier in its power, than all the revolutions that, through ages past, have overswept the face, or the convulsions that have shaken the centre of creation. It would render, at once, unnecessary all the struggles and shocks that are yet to re-place the dislocations and reverse the overturns of this inverted world; it would softly sink the despot's throne; it would sweetly unclasp the bondsman's fetters; it would gently melt the iron dungeon; it would stilly crumble the idol altar; it would blandly wipe the scalding tear, and at once light up the horror of darkness that now densely lies upon the world's surface, with the quick, spontaneous blaze of full millennial day.

And yet the change, to our conceptions so 'minute in the individual instance, and so noiseless even in the universality, is a change as far above any revolution in the course of the world, as the supernatural and the divine, are above the natural and the human. For should you with a merely natural instrumentality, set about the work of this renovation throughout the world, you would find each individual human heart, so intrenched in a defensive apparatus of feeling, will and belief against your operations, both by seige or storm, that doomsday would arrive before the work were even begun.

For this sovereignty of conscience must be an *elective* rule. It can only exist by the consenting, independent, spontaneous adoption of the subject powers within the individual man. There must be not only the consent of the judgment and of the will, but the congenial co-operation of the affections. And this will bring us, perhaps somewhat unexpectedly, to what, we think, will be to your every mind a most plain explication of what theologians in their vocabulary mean by regeneration. The natural passions and affections of every man; it is ascertained by experience, are perpetually wavering and veering from the right conscientious line. Conscience is a dry and unloved abstract principle; the law of right is a dead precept, and the heart beats not with true and cordial emotions in unison with it. Regeneration is the transforming of that *principle* into an *affection*; it is making that dead precept a living impulse; it is the leading the full flow of glowing and ready emotions along the right-lined channel of conscientious obedience. The sovereignty of conscience, no longer a cold and clanking despotism, is loved and

claimed as a most spontaneous freedom. Its rules which once were as fettering cords around the soul, are now the genuine nerve and sinew of the moral purpose. And this simple change, so easily stated, is after all so great, and so out of the man's own power—for who can transform his own affections?—that the Founder of Christianity with a deep-seeing philosophy pronounced it a renovation—a regeneration—a being born again.

And perhaps the whole divinely operative power which Christianity offers to exert in our moral renovation, may be comprised in this one statement; that it *transforms a principle into an affection*. It takes, for instance, the pure principle of *right*, and from a dictate of the conscience, it identifies it with an emotion of the heart, and endows it with an entire ascendancy. It takes the divine law and so transforms it to the sinner's perception, that he who once conscientiously and coldly assented that "the law is holy, just and good," now like the Psalmist exclaims, "How *love* I thy law!" The doctrine of the divine goodness, logically inferred through the works of Providence, by the natural religionist, the gracious spirit transforms into a direct and felt affection.

But the case most to our purpose is this—that while natural theology so argues with a philosopher that he believes in an omnipresent deity, religion so transforms that belief into a perception and a sense, that the pure in heart is emphatically said, to *see God*. To *see God* is to *realize God*; it is to perceive his presence and his goodness so palpably, that though it be attained not by a mere sense, its force is best expressed by the very strongest of our senses and perceptions. And be it not forgotten, that while it is purity of heart that ena-

bles us to see our God, so reciprocally it is the seeing God—the living consciousness of his presence—that can alone preserve our purity of heart. He alone that hath this love in him purifyeth himself even as he is pure. Know ye what this meaneth? My friends, I should prove traitorous alike to the Gospel and to you, could I once admit any power of keeping the heart pure other than the deep perception of the divinity which none of nature's faculties or demonstrations can confer. If in your self-reviews and recognitions of your past mental experiences, conscious memory can call up no moment when you could see and converse with your God—no moment of a sense of the presence, even in a perfect human solitude, of another than yourself—a recognition deep as your own consciousness, of a divinity invisible yet palpable as any humanity around you—a sober, aweing certainty of His scrutiny upon the spirit, yet a grateful sense of His approving condescension—if this forms no part of your experience, then may you fear that you yet want the least germ of that principle that can produce or preserve the purity of the soul. O, then speedily do your first, your preliminary work. Acquaint thyself now with God, and be at peace with him.

But you ask did not the lofty minds of unchristianized antiquity—as a best instance, the stoic philosophers—by the mere power of natural will subject the whole man to the sternest dictates of absolute right? Did not the portico of Athens, to all fair appearance, perform this human miracle, and solve this moral problem? I answer, by its own confession—No! Those noble-minded, lofty-looking and deep-searching men—the Zeno's and the Cato's of the stoa—saw in its full

force and blazing clearness the irreconcilable hostility between the mass of human passions and the law divine. Zeno of Athens and Paul of Tarsus, with equal energy believed that the natural heart "is not subject to the law of God neither indeed can be." Here they agreed—now mark ye where they separated;—it was in the remedy for this warfare. The profoundly thinking stoic saw the incompatibility between the divine law and the human passions; and what was his expedient? Annihilation of the latter; utter extinction of every human affection; total crushing of the heart into nothingness. And to this mighty work did these most honest minded men—these giant specimens of human virtue—right manfully apply themselves. Each brought out his apparatus to amputate the heart from the system—to cauterize all sensibility from the soul—to absorb and abstract all the juices from the spirit. His human saint was a moral skeleton—and a skeleton petrified. His perfect man was a marble man. His moral model was a passionless intellectual statue—a half-living automaton;—moving indeed—but mechanically moving, by the geometric exactness of a right lined law! All philosophic antiquity saw the irreconcilableness between the natural passions and the law of pure conscientiousness; they saw that it was an exterminating war, and they saw but two possible remedies. Exterminate those passions, exclaimed the virtuous Zeno, and leave the law in absolute sway. Exterminate that law, exclaimed the Epicurean, and let the only law be pleasure. No! exclaimed the divine man of Nazareth, as his voice rose in startling clearness from out the plains and hills of Palestine, and streamed through the wide and liberal air. Exterminate not that

law—Heaven and earth shall sooner pass than one jot of its record shall fail. Exterminate not those human affections; crush not that palpitating heart; break not that bruised reed; for blessed are the pure in heart—they shall see God. So spake the blessed Jesus; and not only was there grace upon his lips to pronounce the remedy, but mercy in his heart and power in his hand to make its application.

We have thus far endeavored to illustrate the nature of purity of heart, to analyze its essential element, to show the divine source from which it must come, and to point out the hopelessness of any other origin. My next purpose is to furnish a few hints upon the proper influence of pure moral purpose upon the formation of our opinions and the fixing of our principles.

II. It is one of the not unfashionable liberalisms of the present day, to hold that no man can be blamed for his opinions. "The Great Truth has gone forth to the ends of the earth," proclaimed Lord Rector, subsequently Lord Chancellor Brougham, at the University of Glasgow, "that man shall no more render an account to man for his belief, over which he has himself no control. Henceforth nothing shall prevail upon us to praise or to blame any one for that which he can no more change than the hue of his skin or the height of his stature." Is this doctrine true and sound? Never then was a truth more fit to be enrolled among the primary axioms of falsehood, and to be inscribed upon the title page of the manual of Libertinism. Has truth, has falsehood no moral character? Then has the father of lies begotten an innocent progeny. Not responsible for our opinion? Then we are responsible

for nothing. We are not responsible for the use of our powers; for intellect is the truth seeking power, and if we are not responsible for the right and honest use of that power, we are responsible for the misuse of no other power. Then we are not responsible for the mainspring of all our crimes; for every crime has its spring in, if not a permanent, yet a momentary opinion, which gave it impulse. Then are we not responsible for the shaping of our moral character; for as a man thinketh, so is he; and our principles are the defining lines and bounding angles that delineate and determine the very configuration of our moral being. Then we are not responsible for the issues of our own heart's corruptions; for none can doubt that corrupt and depraved sentiments are the natural product of corrupt feelings. This doctrine is not only in itself corrupt and false, but it is the *πρωτον ψευδος*—the primal falsity—the lie germinant—in which all other falsehoods, if they do not take their start, at any rate find their license.

But what, then, are we responsible for pure mistake? Are we morally bound to be infallible? You are responsible, if not for pure mistake, yet for dishonest mistake. You are morally bound, if not to be infallible, certainly to be incorruptible. And *here* let us draw the true distinction. There is a difference between a merely untrue opinion and a corrupt one. An untrue opinion, is an opinion which coincides not with the actual reality of things; a corrupt opinion is one which accords not with moral purity. An untrue opinion is one falsified by real, though, perhaps, hidden fact; a corrupt opinion is one falsified by morality and justice. An untrue opinion is tested and corrected by the intellect; a corrupt opinion is adjudged and condemned by the conscience. An untrue opinion may arise from a

failure of perception; a corrupt opinion is the foul issue of the impurity of the heart. An untrue opinion is likely to lead us into practical blunder; a corrupt opinion tends to licentiousness and crime. For the former we may be innocent and pardonable; for the later, we are most fearfully responsible, and perhaps justly condemnable.

To what conclusion then can we come other than this?—that though not responsible for honest *inaccuracy* in opinion, we are responsible for the *corruptness* of our belief. Over the formation of our principles, as over the state of our affections, must conscience hold her holy sceptre. If there be such an existing reality as purity of moral character, it may exist not only in the emotions but in the doctrines; and between the pure heart and a pure principle there cannot but be an affinity likely to bring them both into union. If then we have a single purpose to maintain, a single purity of moral disposition; if it be our sincere and devout wish to attain to pure and holy truth; if to be right in heart and in sentiment, be the fervent and candid purpose of our souls, then, though we may not be secure from honest misjudgment, little is the fear that heaven would permit our single heartedness to become the innocent victim of the deceivableness of unrighteousness. And is not a neglect of this subordination of our opinions to the cognition of the moral sense, the great cause of all licentious error? Do not men, in the formation of opinions upon the most momentous moral topics, forget all responsibility; and while listening to the dictates of passion or the processes of intellect, shut out the admonitions of conscience? Strange that upon a moral question, the moral faculty should have no authoritative



suffrage? Many indeed are the instances that might be specified, of the gross results that have come from this exclusive enthronement of usurping authorities. There is scarce any moral absurdity which may not be sustained by some form of *logical* process and a pretext wrought out for *intellectual* belief; and yet the secret monitor within forbids the banns between the cr  dence and the falsity. There is scarcely any moral monstrosity, which may not be wrapped in a hue of glosing words, and so tuned to a round of beautiful periods, as to captivate the fancy to a fond assent; and yet there is a stern counter principle beneath, that will not leave the damnable delusion undisturbed. There is scarce any form of crime, scarce any plot of combined iniquity, scarce any ultra plunge of abandoned profligacy, for which the perpetrator may not dexterously fabricate a goodly frame of phrase, and array it in a showy garb of apologizing plausibleness, sufficient to beguile almost every thing else—save that oracle within the breast, whose voice has so often been hushed or drowned, but whose integrity has never been bribed to Philippize—the deep seated, truth responding conscience. Often, indeed, do we see trains of reasoning so well drawn out and so apparently solid, that no flaw is discovered and no unsoundness is suspected until they have landed us in conclusions so abhorrent to the moral consciousness, that by instantaneous impulse, the whole soul revolts against the entire process, and at once, without the trouble of formal refutation, stamps it with reprobacy. Few men are more truly pitiable, if not, too condemnable for our sympathy, than the interested supporters of opinion at war with their own moral sense; professional manufacturers of logic in defence

of a set and hoary error, maintainable indeed by all the arts of dexterous fallacy, but so discordant to the moral feeling, that the contest within, between the intellectual and the moral man, sets the whole soul uneasily and perpetually at jar. This galling consciousness of untruth within the soul—this burning feeling of a bosom falsehood willfully maintained—this torture of secret and self-confessed badness both of cause and of purpose—plants a serpent's fang in the heart's core of the proudest and wildest diplomatist—it cankers in his pocket and in his soul, the paid wages of the royal conscience keeper; it weaves thorns in the salaried sophist's pillow; and binds like compressing iron the very mitre upon the hierarch's brow. Many a structure of false system, indeed, architecturally built, loftily towering and exulting in seeming strength, is really invisibly tottering over an infirm base, sapped by secret and almost unconscious moral misgiving, and ready at the moments return of honest and pure purpose into the heart upon whose depravity it was based, to be blown up from its foundation, and "like the baseless fabric of a vision leave not a wreck behind." And thus it is that the truth, missed by the proud and sophisticated adepts of logic, are found and embraced by the simple hearted and the conscientious. Thus it is, that the holiest revelations are hid from the proudly wise and wordly prudent, to be revealed unto babes. And thus is, perhaps, sometimes verified the apothegm that truth dwells with the unsophisticated common people. For as the morning vapor, deserting the mountain tops, rolls its cloudy folds adown the declivity, and settles along the fair fields and humble hamlets below, so does truth, often deserting the high places of life, where pride and

power and interest have raised their strong intrenchments, descend downward along the vales of humble humanity, where truth and conscience, unbridled by interest, unawed by power, unperverted by sophistry, speak in their original simplicity of language. And these are all among the ample proofs, that God has not left holy verity at the mercy of proud intellect alone; but has secured, that, when banished by the sophistries of the perverted brain, it may still have another conservative hold upon the ineradicable conscience.

Picture to yourselves, young gentlemen, a youthful candidate for active life, marching forth upon the world's wide stage, filled with the notion that all opinions are irresponsible and all equally innocent; that however carelessly or depravedly adopted, however originating from the basest sources of moral foulness, or however tending to the depths of corruption's bottomless abyss, yet if he can only possess himself of them, if he can but make them his own, they are innocent and blameless; and can you imagine a being more exposed to all the plagues and contagions of this world's wildest depravities, more unbound by all the holy ties and sacred obligations that hold man to his sphere, and more totally adrift upon the surging ocean of lawless licentiousness? What are moral principles but a coat of moral armor, girt around the man defending him from the assaults of temptation and empowering him against his moral foes? What are his moral principles but the cords and chains that bind him round and fasten him to the orbit of moral rectitude? Unharness the man of his iron armor, unclasp him of his wreathing fetter, and what is he? He is in one emphatic word—*unprincipled*.

Go forth into the world then, young gentlemen, with the profoundest sense, both of the weighty responsibility and of the momentous consequences, that press upon the work of forming your principles of moral action. Forget, never, that there is not only honest mistake, but that there are also corrupt, fearful, fatal errors. Holy truth may suffer herself to be misled with impunity; but terrible is her retribution upon him, who is too indolent to seek her existence, or so gross as to slight her value. When the world's lax maxims are loosening and solving the tight bands of rigid principle from around you, when you lend a listening and adopting ear to adventurous tenets, then is the moment, to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Suspect and dread any principle, however plausible and insinuating, which tends in any degree to deprave and adulterate the purity and sensibility of your moral feelings; which dims or obliterates the immutable boundary lines of right and wrong; which lowers the standard of virtue and piety; which blunts the power of conscience; which diminishes the sensible pressure of eternal responsibility, or weakens your full appreciation of solemn accountableness and divine retribution. If these be true, they are truths of a price beyond all price, and to miss them is a ruin beyond all depth; if they be false, the opposite truths are comparatively little worth, and indeed all truth sinks in value, and if missed, small indeed is the harm.

Before I conclude this part of my subject permit me to allude to a point upon which we *might* say much, viz. the firm stand with which this reasoning fixes us upon the immutable basis of Christianity. The great and demonstrative evidence of the Gospel is its *absolute*

*sameness with absolute right.* It is, that the precepts of the Gospel and the dictates of conscience are identical. It is one of the clearest of certainties that the contest between religion and irreligion, is the same as the contest between holiness and unholiness, between good and bad, between right and wrong. On the one hand, it is sure that Christianity somehow *has* identified itself with rigid principle and conscientious rectitude; and on the other, irreligion *has* somehow become one with loose principles and licentious practice. Sure, then, as there is truth in conscience there is truth in Christianity. If right and truth be not diverse, but self-evidently one, then pure religion is the identity of both.

And we do think it obvious to the most casual, candid glance, that somehow or other, those doctrines which are looked upon as the more central dogmas of Christianity—the specific tenets of evangelical Christianity—do possess a grappling affinity with all the holy virtues, the domestic purities and the living active benevolences that bless mankind. Now this fact cannot well be drawn out into a train of severe and consecutive logic; but to the mind predisposed to “whatsoever things are lovely,” it gives to Christianity a demonstrated divinity beyond all scientific demonstration. I have ardently studied the evidences of the Gospel derived from the voluminous sources of prophecy, and history, and miracle; and I feel a full assurance that were one half their body struck out of existence, the argument that Christianity is identical with pure, essential, right, is the unmoved and the all-sufficient proof that Christianity is identical with essential truth.

And thus opens to us a clear reply to those who de-

nounce the rigid grappel which the Christian heart fixes upon the Christian truths, as being bigotry and prejudice. That affinity which the pure heart feels for the evidences of a purifying truth, is a holy affinity. A predisposition for a demoralizing dogma—a presumption in favor of a licentious sophism, is both bigotry and prejudice; but the preference of the pure in feeling for the pure in sentiment is neither passion nor prejudice; but a blessed freedom from both.

When, therefore, I contemplate the vast mass of historical evidences, I feel that they are an impregnable iron armor, with which we may triumphantly meet the sceptic's logical assault; but when I contemplate this identification of Christianity with the moral sense, I feel *that* to be the demonstration of the spirit, which goes most deeply with its assurance to the soul. The deductions of reason are drawn through a fallible length of process; the decisions of conscience are instantaneous and immediate. When by the light of the former I see the historic proof of its truth, I feel that there is no sophism; when by the light of the latter, I see that it is *absolute right*, I know that there can be no mistake.

If then in the matter of purifying the affections, we commended you to the precepts and the divine spirit of the Gospel, in the matter of forming a purity of principles, would we commend to your entire and fervent faith, her doctrines. Her truths are no ineffective dogmas; when brought into operation upon the heart and soul, sanctifying to our nature is their whole purpose and power. The more that heart is purified, the more those doctrines are congenial and embraced; and then, the more deeply they are embraced, the more purifying,

reciprocally, is their power. And thus Christian experience has long proved, that the highest attainment of holiness is ever in union with the most perfect possession of faith. The whole theory—the summary purpose of the Gospel truths, is, in the Apostle's striking phrase, to purify the heart *by faith*. Sanctify them through thy truth; was the dying prayer of your atoning Savior.

III. Too much I have not said upon the two former parts of my subject, if I have presented an impressive view of the momentous importance of a pure heart, united with pure principle; for when these are imbued with a spirit of rectitude, action will be spontaneously right. You are now standing upon the threshold of the world of action. To your eyes, the scenes that now surround you are momentary. To your view, dim and shadowy evanescence hangs, veil-like, over the halls, and seats, and rooms, over the hills and fields, so long your own familiar home. The years which you have here spent, have gone to join the centuries of the irrevocable past; the future looms up before you filled with the shadowy outlines of incalculable events; and from its distant prospective, the summons to action, action, action, thrills upon your spirit's ear. Already the restraints and details to which you were here confined are losing their common place character; momentarily there rushes upon you a gushing, agonizing sense of the crisis, which usually you can scarcely realize to have come upon you in your life's journey; you fling an anxious eye forward, to descry if "coming events cast their shadows before;" you scrutinize with tremulous anxiety, your own capabilities of success; and you fluctuate, with alternate vibration, between a

dread of life's future uncertainties and an impetuous ardor to try the dashing hazard. Could I hold up before you a mirror in whose transparent scope should be imaged the visible panorama of your future destinies—ought I to hold it forth—and would you dare to contemplate its presentations? Alas, young gentlemen, rightly and beautifully has one said, “the veil that hides from our sight the events of succeeding years is a veil woven by the hand of mercy.”

Naturally as the very blood's pulsation, in youth's warm heyday, are the promptings of an impulsive, aspiring ambition. But in those moments, when the conscientious principle has been alert, the question cannot but have occurred to you, how far these feelings require to be chastened; or whether the desire and purpose of eminence, in other words, the *principle of emulation*, be at all a justifiable impulse of action. Important as it pre-eminently is, that the ardor of ambitious action should be regulated by principle, I know no point more obviously worthy our present attention.

I cannot join, then, with those excellent men who wholly condemn *emulation* as an impulse of action. I should at least place it upon a level with a desire of property, or any other constitutional principle of man as man, requiring indeed regulation, but performing under that regulation, a natural and healthful action, and securing its proper and legitimate happiness. The objection that emulation is not itself a praiseworthy motive, is true of the desire of food, or the love of the beautiful, both of which, though in themselves not praise worthy motives, are the proper impulses to correct and salutary action; the objection that emulation is liable to abuse, is no more than is obviously true of



all our active powers and principles; the objection is closely allied to a vice—that it is liable to be transformed into envy—is true even of the noblest virtues, all of which are bounded by an almost invisible line, from some closely adjacent vice. Emulation, like most of our natural active principles, if rightly directed and properly checked, although in itself neither a moral nor an immoral quality, may be made a productive cause of great and happy and beneficial result. If it ever fire you with an excess above a healthful medium; if ever it engross the soul to the pre-occupancy of the place appropriate to higher and more sacred feelings; if it ever crush a holy emotion or suppress a pure sympathy; if it ever induce you to trample upon a bounden duty, or violate a just obligation; if it ever degenerate into a base and malignant envy at a rivals fair success, or lead you to the use of an unfair advantage to prevent it; if it inspire in you a haughty supercilious triumph in the hour of success, or unmanly and rankling despondency in defeat, then has your generous emulation degenerated into a base passion, a curse embosomed within your soul.

Go forth then into the world, again I say, young gentlemen, animated with the purpose of attaining all the eminence in whatever path you tread, which can be attained without one holy principle sacrificed. Go, nobly, yet *purely* aspiring; and doubt not that the noblest of the sons of men, is he, who, from the highest watch-tower of human eminence, attained without one unholy compromise, looks out upon the world of men, swaying them with all the might of moral influences, and proclaiming in their hearing thrilling truths—"truths that wake to perish never." And what gives the ultimate

finish to this model is, that while he may humanly yet temperately enjoy the pleasures of elevation and success, so chastened is that ambition, that he could have passed through a humble line of life without one murmur against Providence; that he could have seen the success of some undeserving rival, with pity, indeed, for those who may suffer for *his* false advancement, but without one rankle of envy, at his triumph; that he could have lived unknown, unpraised, unsung, and never once pined with the gnawing discontent of unappreciated merit. This, young gentlemen, is pure and perfect greatness; this is a noble ambition; a plant that may spring and bloom even in the soil of that heart whose very element is purity.

And scarcely may I admit that this ambition can exist in any other than those to whom is realized the promise of the pure in heart, that they shall see God. To see God—is to recognize his existence—his very living presence around, within us. And he who possesses this recognition, even upon the summit of earthly power, feels O how deeply, that there is an approbation in comparison with which human applause is vanity; and in the very depths of humiliation he may feel that though his diamond worth be invisible to mortal eye, an eye there is which omnisciently looks down, and amid the earthly rubbish that surrounds it, knows and estimates full well the priceless jewel. Such is a pure ambition; and this, young friends, be yours.

The places that here now know you, will soon know you no more—perhaps—forever. It is the place, of us your former instructors, permanently here to stand and observe as your successive ranks pass on. To us ye are a most thrilling emblem, how rapidly one generation goeth away and another cometh. And how like

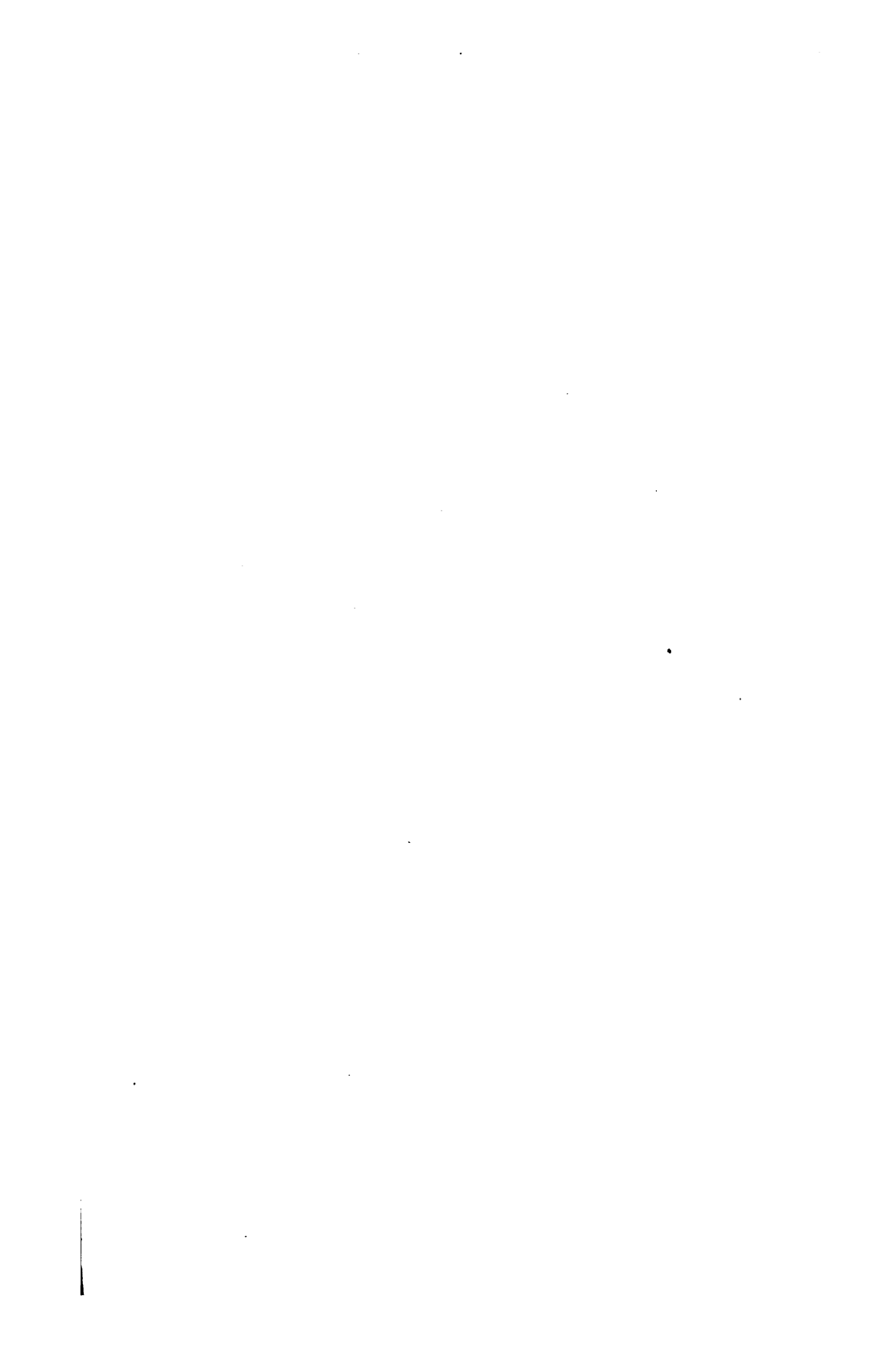
are the events of collegiate existence to the great events of real life! If any class of human beings can be called men of two lives, it is that of the academic graduate. Here in this little world have you been placed, an enclosed world *preparatory* to the the great world now before you. Your little republic has had in its own little horizon—its events and its history—its excitements and its politics—its oligarchies and its aristocracies—its rise and fall of popular leaders—nay, the whole routine of vicissitudes and passions, which human nature, ever on a less or greater scale the same, exhibits in larger and fiercer democracies. Justly then and beautifully has a college been called a world in miniature.

But in this comparison, there is one analogy which is as momentous as it has been unnoticed. Solemn is the consideration that in all your past collegiate life, you have been laying up a retribution which you are to meet in the world into which you are now stepping. Of not a neglect have you been guilty, not an acquirement have you lost or gained, not a habit have you formed which will not send its retributive consequences across the boundary line, to expend themselves in your future life, either in direct effects upon *yourself*, or upon those counteractives which you may feebly afford against them.

There is no light in which man's nature can be viewed more striking than the light of his infinite responsibilities. No finite being can perhaps be presented upon a position at once so fearful and so grand, as an immortal being standing upon the lofty promontory of his own eternal responsibility, balancing in his own vibrating hand, and deciding by his own vibrating will,

two opposite infinities of eternal bliss and eternal woe. If in those trembling scales he weighs such destinies, it is at once, his vast prerogative, and God's full justification, that his own hand must fling in the weight that settles the momentous preponderance. And how does it give at once an appalling consequence to each least breath we draw, to know that every deed—every word—every thought—tells weightily upon that high suspended balance. Tread carefully, child of eternity, upon the stage of your probation for the echoes of your every footstep send their undying peal through the ceaseless ages of your immortality. Breathe softly, heir of retribution; for thy every whispered word, nay each unwhispered thought—immortal as thyself—swiftly ascends on high and inscribes itself, in imperishable letters, upon the records of eternal judgment, to be read by the eye of God Omnipotent, in the light of a blazing world, to the ears of a trembling universe. Trembling with you, my friends before the dread eternal issue, to life's great trial we commit you; and could we commission our prayers as guardian angels, they should wing their hovering presence perpetually around your path. May the spirit of the pure Jehovah breathe his purity in your hearts and may his approving eye beam in conscious blessings upon your steps. Purified may you come at the issue of life's great ordeal; peacefully may you behold your God in the trying day, and blissfully may you dwell in His eternal presence.

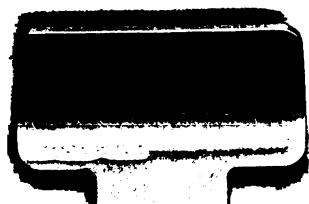
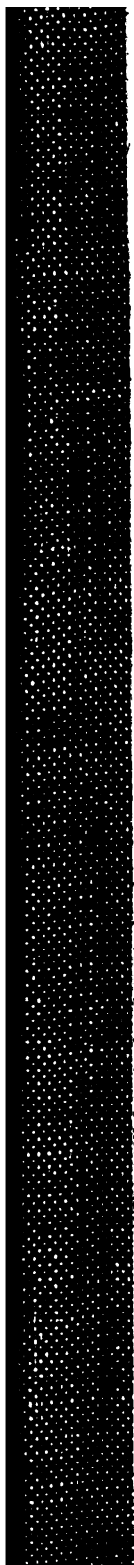




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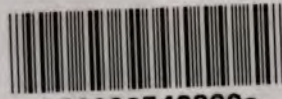


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